

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The New Year rang in the traditional changes in RRF's leadership group, and we said goodbye to some old familiar faces and hello to some (fairly) fresh new ones. Very many thanks to our departing Directors: Mike Collopy, Mike Kochert, Laurie Goodrich and Fabrizio Sergio, who all completed their terms in December (see elsewhere in this edition for a special tribute to the long-serving 'Two Mikes'). Welcome to our in-coming Directors: Rob Bierregard, Rick Harness, Miguel Ferrer and Fabrizio Sergio (re-elected!). We've also seen some changes in our line-up of Committee Chairs: thank you to departing Chairs: Brent Bibles (Awards), Tom Sprout (Education) and Libby Mojica (Conference), and welcome to in-coming Chairs: Gary Santolo (Awards), Jeremy Scheivert (Education) and Kate Davis (Conference). It is only down to these people, as well as our other Directors, Committee Chairs, Officers, Editors etc., that RRF continues to flourish as the most effective international society for raptor researchers.

For those of you interested in getting involved with RRF leadership activities, there are plenty of opportunities available in the forthcoming election – see inside for the call for nominations for Directors, Vice-President and President-Elect. I hope that some of you will be interested in standing for these roles and I hope that all of you will make the effort to cast your vote later in the year. The number of members who vote in our elections is typically low – usually around 15%. This has always struck me as quite odd, especially since the introduction of on-line voting. Come on folks, do your bit!

In contrast, in November we received an overwhelming and unprecedented response to our open letter about the proposed Society for Ornithology (SFO). The letter, drafted by two talented Directors and approved unanimously by the entire Board, was our formal response to the concept of disbanding RRF to make way for a massive, and potentially dangerously powerful, single ornithological society, with its focus firmly on the Western Hemisphere. We shared our perspectives with the entire OSNA community, to promote a culture of discussion amongst all the stakeholders, and were subsequently bombarded with messages of support, both from RRF members and non-members alike (read the letter and the email responses here: <http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org/rrf/rrf-response-to-the-society-for-ornithology>). Thank you to everyone who took the time to share their views; it was gratifying for the Board to hear how much RRF means to you, and we learned quite a lot about which aspects of RRF in particular were the most valued.

One of the most highly-regarded services that RRF provides is our annual conference. We have developed a well-deserved reputation for the quality and enjoyment of these events, and our most recent conference, held in Duluth, Minnesota last October, was no exception. The conference atmosphere in Duluth was so good that even the 'scenic' train ride around Lake Superior, which took place in pitch blackness and with a tiny bar that struggled to cope with demand, could not dampen spirits. Most of this was undoubtedly due to local conference committee chair, Julie O'Connor and her

happy band of helpers from Hawk Ridge. Thanks, Julie, and everyone involved with the conference planning, for a thoroughly enjoyable week.

This year's conference is a shared event at the North American Ornithological Conference in Vancouver, Canada. We usually participate as it only occurs approx. every five years, although personally it's not my favourite. I know some members enjoy it, and there are definite benefits, but for those of us with a narrower field of interest it can be harder to appreciate. I'm particularly disappointed to see the cost of registration this year, which, combined with increased travel costs associated with August flights (school-holiday time so airlines raise their fares considerably), will put this conference out of reach for many. Our participation at these mega-conferences is by no means a given; the Board votes on whether to participate at each individual event. The next one won't happen for another five or so years, but the planning proposal will be circulated much earlier than that so our current Directors will likely be involved in voting for or against our future

participation. So if you have strong views on our participation, either for or against, please let your Directors know.

Here's hoping you all have a productive and enjoyable field season (or writing-up period if you've just finished) – and don't forget to vote!

Best, Ruth



RAPTORS OF THE WORLD



[See images on RRF home page]

RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION, INC

OFFICERS

President: Ruth Tingay
Vice-president: Ted Swem

Secretary: Greg George
Treasurer: Angela Matz

DIRECTORS

Eurasian: Fabrizio Sergio
Southern Hemisphere: Miguel Saggese
At Large Outside North America: Marc Ruddock
North America #1: John Smallwood
North America #2: Gary Santolo
North America #3: Rick Harness

At Large #1: Munir Virani
At Large #2: Clint Boal
At Large #3: Rob Bierregaard
At Large #4: Carol McIntyre
At Large #5: Torgeir Nygard
At Large #6: Miguel Ferrer

For more information about the Raptor Research Foundation, Inc. (founded in 1966), please visit the RRF website at: <http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org/>.

Persons interested in birds of prey are invited to join the Raptor Research Foundation (RRF). *Wingspan* is emailed twice each year to all members of RRF and is available on the RRF website. Members also receive *The Journal of Raptor Research* (ISSN 0892-1016), which is published quarterly. For membership and subscription information, please contact: Ornithological Societies of North America, 5400 Bosque Boulevard, Suite 680, Waco, TX 76710, USA; 1-254-399-9636 (phone); 1-254-776-3767 (fax); business@osnabirds.org (email); <http://www.osnabirds.org> (web).

Editor's Note – Thanks to the following contributors for this issue of the *Wingspan*: Karla Bloem, Clint Boal, Travis Booms, Mansoor Dahri, Kate Davis, Wade Eakle, Matt Giovanni, Laurie Goodrich, Arthur Green, Gene Jacobs, Mike Kochert, Carol McIntyre, Libby Mojica, Jemima Parry-Jones, Chuck Preston, Glenn Proudfoot, Gary Santolo, Daniel Schmidt, Ruth Tingay, Dan Varland, Munir Virani, Seren Waters, Rick Watson, Susan Whaley.

Wingspan welcomes contributions from RRF members and others interested in raptor biology and management. Please submit contributions via email to Petra Bohall Wood, *Wingspan* Editor, at rrfwingspan@mail.wvu.edu. For long contributions, please send as an MS Word attachment. If you are submitting photos, please include them within the Word doc with a caption and photo credit. Contribution deadline for the next issue is **15 August 2012**.

All issues of *Wingspan* and content guidelines are available at:

<http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org/publications/wingspan-newsletter/online-newsletters-pdfs>

Check out the latest edition of the **Journal of Raptor Research**. Includes Research Articles on Snowy Owls, Northern Goshawks, Guatemalan Pygmy -Owls, Daito Scops Owls, American Kestrels, and Bonelli's Eagle. Read More



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Get Involved with RRF!!**The Raptor Research Foundation Needs Your Help**

The Raptor Research Foundation is a small society of researchers worldwide that have a passion for raptors. One of the nice things about being a small society is that it is easy to become involved, get to know your fellow researchers, and take part in shaping the direction of RRF.

One way to do this is to serve on committees. Check the website for information on committees and their activities. Contact current Chairs for information on how you can be involved.

Another way to become involved is to serve on the RRF Board of Directors. We are currently seeking RRF members with an interest in serving on the Board of Directors beginning in January 2013.

Whether you are a student or experienced researcher your energy, enthusiasm, and interest in being involved in the organization are ALL that is needed! We have several Director positions to be elected in fall 2012: (1) a North American director position, (2) an at-large outside North America director position, and (3 and 4) two at-large positions with no geographic restrictions (i.e., can be from any country). Finally, we are also seeking candidates for Vice President and President-Elect.

The President-Elect assists the current President until her term is completed at end of 2013 and then assumes the President position.

Directors interact through quarterly e-meetings to discuss and vote through email on items of business. Most of them serve on a committee to assist the society with various tasks, and they attend the annual face-to-face board meetings when it is feasible. If you would like to add your name to the ballot or if you have suggestions for possible nominees for RRF Director positions, contact me, Laurie Goodrich, RRF Nominations Committee Chair, before April 30.

Do not be shy about volunteering, RRF is inviting your participation! Call or email any questions or nominations to, Laurie Goodrich, goodrich@hawkmtn.org or 570-943-3411 x106. I look forward to hearing from you!

RRF Seeks New Treasurer to assume duties in October 2013

The Treasurer serves a 3-year term and may serve successive terms upon re-election by the Board. He/she acts as custodian of RRF funds and property, maintains RRF financial records, and works with the RRF's Finance Committee and financial advisor in managing the RRF investment portfolio. This early advertisement will facilitate obtaining a replacement in time for a period of induction and overlap with current treasurer Angela Matz's term. Anyone interested in serving RRF in this demanding, but very rewarding position, please contact Search Committee Chair, Mike Kochert, mkochert@usgs.gov, [committee members Clint Boal, Rick Harness, or Angela Matz](#), or any board member.

**RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION
2012 ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

2012 Conference: 14-18 August 2012, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada



Conference website: <http://www.naoc-v2012.com/>

RRF will participate in the North American Ornithological Conference V in a joint meeting with nine other ornithological societies. The 5th North American Ornithological Conference, organized jointly by the American Ornithologists' Union, Society of Canadian Ornithologists/ Societe des Ornithologistes du Canada, Bird Studies Canada, Association of Field Ornithologists, Cooper Ornithological Society, Raptor Research Foundation, La Sociedad para el Estudio y Conservacion de las Aves en Mexico [CIPAMEX], Waterbird Society, and Wilson Ornithological Society, will be held at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The 4 day scientific program (15-18 August) will be preceded by annual and council meetings of most of the ornithological societies, and scientific and ENGO workshops. The opening reception will be held on the evening of 14 August. Field trips will be offered before and after the scientific program. The Steering Committee for NAOC-V, with representatives from each of the participating ornithological groups, is engaged in the conference planning details.

RRF BUSINESS MEETING – Saturday 18 August 2012 at noon. Lunch will be catered for attending RRF members.

REGISTRATION IS OPEN. Early bird registration rates offered until 15 May 2012. For registration information: <http://www.naoc-v2012.com/registration>

ACCOMMODATIONS – Conference attendees are being offered on-campus accommodation at the University of British Columbia. Rooms vary in price (Canadian dollars): \$47/night (shared accommodations but with private bedrooms), \$48/night (dormitory with private bedrooms), and \$119-\$183/night (private suites with private bathrooms). See the website for photos and detailed descriptions of each room <http://www.naoc-v2012.com/accommodation>

STUDENT – EARLY CAREER EVENTS – Several good events are planned throughout the week including a student-professional dinner, student-mentor lunch, quiz bowl, and media workshop. Visit the website for more details on how to sign up for these activities <http://www.naoc-v2012.com/students>. In addition, there will be student presentation awards for students who are presenting and are also first author on the presentation.

SPECIAL WORKSHOPS are being offered. Details of these Workshops are available on the web site. Space will be limited so please register early for these specific workshops. The program will also include many other excellent Workshops, to be scheduled the day before or after the conference. <http://www.naoc-v2012.com/program>

- Estimating avian abundance and occupancy with marked and unmarked individuals (Registration for this workshop is available via the online registration form).
- Bird-banding Techniques (Registration for this workshop is available via the online registration form).
- Getting the message out: How to communicate your research effectively through the media.
- Using and contributing to avian collections.
- North American Ornithological Atlas Committee (NORAC).
- Important Bird Areas in North America: Linking efforts across borders.
- Enhancing automated analysis of acoustic monitoring data.
- The status of Gavia: Conservation in black and white.
- How a manuscript becomes a paper: writing and reviewing scientific papers.

SYMPOSIA

- Assessing bird populations at regional to continental scales: results from innovative approaches to data intensive analyses of North American birds.
- Tracking migratory stopover phenology: Climate change and the phenological synchrony of North American bird migration with seasonal resources.
- The application of next-generation sequencing to ornithological research.
- Avian disease ecology: from the individual to the landscape.
- Hot topics in the Tropics: Research to support full life-cycle conservation of migrants.
- Tracking long distance migration of small birds: new discoveries in migration ecology
- Assessing the impact of marine renewable energy installations on birds: lessons learned.
- Phylogenetics, diversification and conservation of all birds.
- Recent advances in acoustic monitoring of birds.
- Movement ecology of migratory birds in relation to an ecological barrier across different levels of analysis: Lessons from two major regional systems.
- Integrating avian physiology and ecology: phenotypic variation and fitness

UPCOMING RAPTOR MEETINGS

2013 RRF Conference -- 21-25 October, Bariloche, Argentina

RRF is excited to announce our first annual conference in South America in conjunction with the Neotropical Raptor Network (The Peregrine Fund) and The World Working Group on Birds of Prey and Owls. The conference will be hosted by the Universidad Nacional del Comahue – INIBIOMA/CONICET, Bariloche, Argentina and co-hosted by Club de Observadores de Aves de Bariloche and SNAP (Sociedad Naturalista Andino Patagonica). The conference will be held at the Hotel Panamericano Bariloche, a five star hotel in downtown Bariloche. The local organizing committee chairs are Dr. Miguel D. Saggese, (CVM-Western University of Health Sciences, California, USA), Dr. Valeria Ojeda and Dr. Sergio A. Lambertucci (Laboratorio Ecotono, Universidad Nacional del Comahue – INIBIOMA/CONICET, Bariloche, Rio Negro, Argentina). For more information, please contact the [RRF conference chair](#).

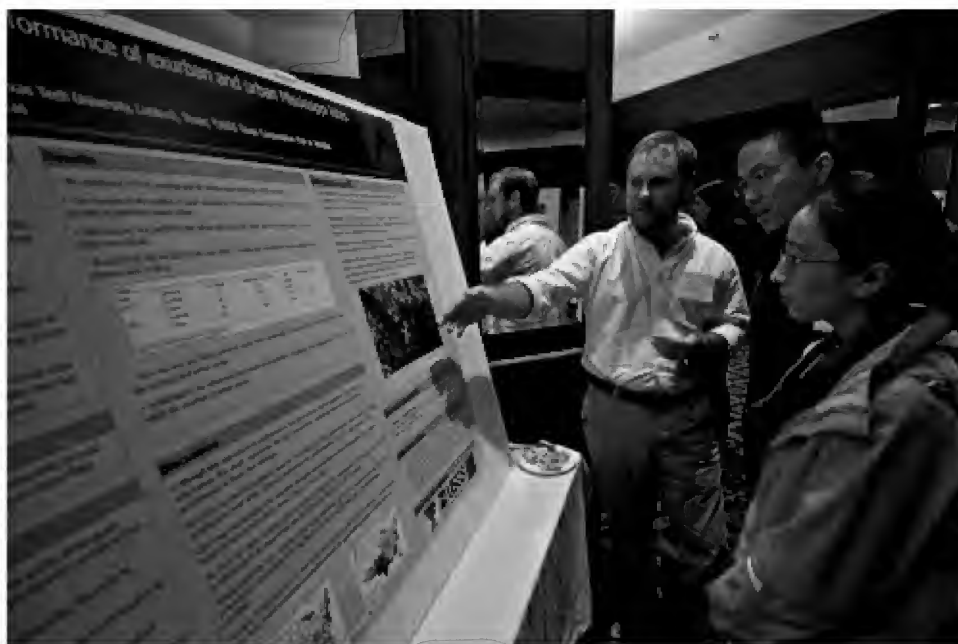
Pan-African Vulture Summit 2012

In April of this year, the first ever Pan-African Vulture Summit will be held in the Maasai Mara, Kenya. The purpose of this meeting is to assess the current status and threats facing vultures in Africa and to formulate a pan-African conservation strategy for vultures. Participants have been invited from 17 African countries and abroad to develop a framework for vulture conservation across the African continent. Participants include vulture researchers, government wildlife officials, and international and local NGOs. The meeting is funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Sasol Limited with organization and planning by the Endangered Wildlife Trust – Birds of Prey Programme, South Africa and The Peregrine Fund, U.S. For further information contact: Andre Botha andreb@ewt.org.za, Darcy Ogada darcyogada@yahoo.com or Munir Virani tpf@africaonline.co.ke

Highlights of the 2011 RRF Conference: Duluth, MN

Submitted by Dan Varland and Kate Davis

The 2011 Raptor Research Foundation annual conference was held October 5-9, 2011 at the Radisson Hotel in Duluth, Minnesota. The conference was hosted by the University of Minnesota's Natural Resource Research Institute, Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, and the Duluth Audubon Society. There were 321 in attendance, including 120 RRF members and 48 students. In addition to general scientific sessions and a poster session covering a wide range of raptor species and topics, symposia were convened on wind energy and raptors, golden eagles, *Aegolius* owls, short-eared owls, and pesticides and metals. In addition, the Early Career Raptor Researchers Committee hosted a day of raptor research short courses for students and early career professionals.



2011 Early Career Raptor Researcher (ECRR) Skills Workshop a Tremendous Success!

Submitted by Travis Booms

The RRF Early Career Raptor Researcher (ECRR) Committee hosted the first of its kind workshop focusing exclusively on hands-on learning about current raptor research techniques for ECRR's during the 2011 annual meeting in Duluth. We offered students an opportunity to enroll in a variety of classes taught by leading experts in the field, ranging from study skin preparation and rock climbing to harnessing raptors with transmitters and capture techniques. These were not your ordinary college courses... students were provided hands-on training often with freshly thawed raptor carcasses. Dirty hands were common from students conducting necropsies or skinning raptor carcasses ranging in size from Sharp-shinned Hawks to Great-horned Owls and while attaching patagial, transmitters, bands, and a host of other markers to raptor carcasses. In other classes, students learned the subtle techniques of noose tying, trap building, and the not-so-subtle art of rappelling down sheer rock walls to access raptor nests at the University of Minnesota Duluth Climbing Wall.

Students and instructors appeared to both thoroughly enjoy their experiences during the workshop. Learning moved in both directions; students and mentors alike came away with new and useful insights and skills. In total, over 40 students enrolled in 6 courses taught by RRF instructors scattered throughout the first day of the conference. Students were charged a nominal fee of \$10 per course, which helped off-setting workshop costs. The RRF Board was a critical supporter of the workshop by providing additional money to ensure the workshops were successful. Also key were the 10 instructors who freely donated their time, additional travel costs, and enthusiasm for the sole benefit of RRF's ECRRs. Thank you workshop instructors!

The next ECRR Skills Workshop will occur during the 2013 annual meeting in Bariloche, Argentina. The ECRR committee has decided not to focus on the 2012 Vancouver joint meeting because a long list of student events are already planned by the local committee for that conference. Instead we will focus workshop planning efforts on the 2013 conference where we look forward to

providing this learning opportunity to the many ECRRs in South America who can rarely attend RRF meetings in the USA. If you are interested in helping out with the 2013 event or in becoming more involved in RRF ECRRs, please contact the ECRR Committee Chair: Travis Booms (travis.booms@alaska.gov) or email rrf-early-career-raptor-researchers@googlegroups.com.



Dan Varland and Wayne Nelson showing students how to measure and mark raptors



ECRR Jordan Muir taking notes on constructing bal-chattris



Dr. Irene Bueno-Padilla demonstrating necropsy techniques on a raptor carcass to students



Students gather around a carcass to learn the how to necropsy a raptor carcass



Brian Millsap pointing out details of harnessing raptors with transmitters



Students making study skin specimens



Students exchanging ideas and checking out a variety of transmitter and harness configurations

News from the RRF

PRESIDENT'S AWARD 2011

Submitted by Ruth Tingay

The President's Award, given in recognition and appreciation of exceptional service to RRF, was presented to Angela Matz (right) and Cheryl Dykstra (left) at the annual conference in Duluth, October 2011.

Angela Matz

I first remember meeting Angela at the Bakersfield, California conference in 2004. Somehow I'd been roped in to moderating one of the sessions, and as a student, I was pretty intimidated at the prospect. Angela, who was serving as the Scientific Programme Chair at the time, marched down a corridor towards me, checked my name badge, thrust a clock and a set of typed instructions into my hands, looked me in



the eye and said, "*Keep them on time*", before disappearing in a tornado of efficiency.

That (now notorious) efficiency has been evident for almost a decade and RRF has reaped the benefits. Angela has served our organisation in various guises, including as Scientific Programme Chair (2003, 2004, 2005); Secretary (2006) and Treasurer (2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and counting). Since she became Treasurer, she has single-handedly transformed our previously complex accounting procedures into a stream-lined and simpler process, making it easier for the Board in their financial deliberations. The enormity of that task, and the consequential advantages it brought to RRF, cannot and should not be underestimated. It's a rare day in the year when Angela is not doing something for RRF, and I am personally thankful that our terms in office have coincided. Thank you and congratulations, Angela – one of RRF's best-kept secrets.

Cheryl Dykstra

I won't repeat all of the speech I made about Cheryl during the Duluth awards banquet – it might not translate so well into the written word (those of you who were there will know what I mean!).

Cheryl accepted the role of Editor of The Journal of Raptor Research in 2006. The appointment is supposed to be a three-year term; thankfully, she has not yet resigned. Under Cheryl's leadership, our journal has been transformed from being a very good publication, to being an excellent publication, in a relatively short period of time. She has recruited an impressive team of associate editors, and the standard now required for an article's acceptance is the highest it's ever been. JRR is now much more accessible to researchers all over the world, thanks to Cheryl's determination to bring it into the digital age. She initiated a contract with an on-line distributor (BioOne), and not only does this allow greater access, but it also brings in approx. \$10,000 per annum for RRF. Later this year, authors will be able to

submit their papers electronically, bringing us up-to-date with many other international journals; again, this was initiated by Cheryl.

In all the years I've had the pleasure of working with her, I've never once heard Cheryl complain. That alone deserves a medal. Thank you and congratulations, Cheryl – this award is well-deserved.

A Heartfelt Thank You to Mike Collopy and Mike Kochert for Decades of Service to RRF!

Submitted by Carol McIntyre with contributions
from Clint Boal, Judy Henckel, Ted Swem and Keith Bildstein

A chapter in Raptor Research Foundation (RRF) history ended on December 31, 2011 when Michael W. Collopy and Michael N. Kochert completed their terms as RRF board directors. Their individual and combined long-term service to RRF clearly reflects their dedication to this organization and the conservation of raptors.

Their long-time friendship and professional collaborations started in 1976 when Mike Collopy stumbled into Mike Kochert's office at the BLM field office in Boise, Idaho. Eager to start his fieldwork on Golden Eagles as part of his Ph.D. work, Collopy was expecting to meet another colleague in Boise who had promised to help with his field logistics. Much to Collopy's surprise, that colleague didn't show up. Kochert was equally surprised when Collopy ended up turning to him for help. After a bit of creative bargaining and (as Collopy admits) begging, they reached a deal (apparently involving a lifetime supply of beer for Kochert) and Collopy was able to start his fieldwork.

Together, Mike Collopy and Mike Kochert have served nearly 50 years in an official capacity on the RRF board or RRF committees, and each have been RRF members for decades. Although we may jokingly refer to them as the archives of institutional memory (which they are), their manifest roles in the development of RRF cannot be overstated. All past, current and future members of RRF are the beneficiaries of their hard work, helping RRF grow from a collection of a few raptor enthusiasts to an international organization that provides the strongest voice for research and conservation of birds of prey.

While they brought many different skills to RRF, together they set the standard for fiscal and fiduciary responsibility that should preserve and protect RRF's interests for many generations. Equally important, they have served as mentors for many RRF members, including new (and future) board members and officers. Both have contributed countless hours of service to RRF's day-to-day business while maintaining a long-term perspective and institutional memory that would have been sorely missed in their absence. They have made enormous contributions in developing and implementing RRF's vision and provided RRF with a strong foundation to continue its work for generations to come.

Mike Kochert has attended nearly all the RRF annual meetings since he became a RRF member in 1971. (For the record, he has attended 36 RRF annual meetings and 3 Eurasian RRF conferences). Mike joined the RRF board as Vice President in 1994 (1994-1996), and then served as President-elect

(1996-1997), President (1998-2001), Past-President (2001-2006), and Director (2009-2011). He served as chair of the RRF Conference Committee (1987 to 1997) and continues to serve on the RRF Finance Committee (2010 to present). He also served on the local organizing committee for the 1975, 1987, and 1996 RRF annual meetings. RRF is an important part of Mike's life. He joined RRF when he was a graduate student and grew up with the organization. In his words *"I joined RRF, essentially as a wet-eared kid and RRF was a fledgling organization with a newsletter as its publication (Raptor Research News) and a North American focus. Now, as a gray-beard, RRF is a highly respected ornithological organization with a prestigious scientific journal."* Mike believes that RRF has made significant contributions to the conservation of raptors and will continue to do so. He is honored to have been part of RRF's evolution. Mike sees RRF continuing with its phenomenal evolution, increasing its stature within the scientific community and expanding internationally. He expressed his whole-hearted thanks for the recognition of his service to RRF that President Ruth Tingay and the RRF board bestowed on him at the 2011 RRF meeting; he was quite humbled this recognition. In his words, *"The last 40 years as an RRF member and the 20 years that I served as Director, Officer, and Committee Chair have been extremely rewarding and gratifying. I won't leave my RRF family and I intend to remain active with the organization."*

Mike Collopy became a RRF member in 1972 and his official service on the RRF board spans 28 continuous years. He began serving on the RRF board in 1984 as a Director (1984-1991) and continued serving as Vice President (1991-1993), President-Elect (1993), President (1994-1995), Past-President (1996-1999), and Director (1999-2011). Mike also served on the RRF Conservation Committee (1996-1997) and was the RRF Resolutions Committee chair (1983-1987). He organized and hosted several RRF meetings including the Northern Spotted Owl Symposium at RRF's annual meeting in Seattle, Washington (1992), the joint meeting between RRF and the World Working Group on Birds of Prey and Owls in Veracruz, Mexico (1989), and the RRF annual meeting in Gainesville, Florida (1986). During his tenure with the RRF board and committees, Mike worked diligently with others to develop RRF into a respected scientific organization. He helped increase our membership, improved RRF by incorporating member's suggestions, and helped launch the RRF's Wingspan. As his colleagues know, Mike has an uncanny ability to grasp the essence of tough issues and is honest and candid when expressing his opinion on what he believes is right. Throughout all his years on the RRF Board, Mike earned the title of "budget hawk" – always keeping a sharp eye on the bottom line. Through his vigilance, the RRF board developed and continues to maintain a budgetary discipline that helped put us on solid financial footing. Mike's tenure on the RRF board was recently described by long-time RRF member, Keith Bildstein -- *"I can think of no better RRF team player than Mike Collopy. From hosting several annual meetings to providing leadership across the decades, Mike stands at the top of a core pack of avid 'raptorphiles' who have moved RRF forward in numerous positive ways. I am humbled by his consistent service to the organization."* Mike has been a long-time member of many professional societies, but RRF has always been his favorite. In his words – *"Not only are the birds we study phenomenal, but our members are friendly, open and committed to their work with raptors. Our meetings are welcoming, professional and well-organized, and a great place to connect with colleagues and friends. I think our collective contributions to raptor conservation have been outstanding, so it has been very easy for me to stay involved with RRF. RRF has made great strides in becoming a truly international organization, and I would like to see that continue, particularly if it increases our ability to influence raptor conservation worldwide. I will continue to do what I can to help."*

At the awards banquet at our annual meeting in Duluth, Minnesota in October 2011, the RRF board thanked Mike and Mike with a “friendly” roasting and presented them with lifetime RRF memberships. Although they have ended their “official” service on the RRF board, they will continue to make significant contributions to RRF and help those managing it. The entire RRF community extends a heartfelt thank you to Mike Collopy and Mike Kochert for their invaluable service to RRF.



Mike Collopy (left) and Mike Kochert (right) during the earlier parts of their careers.



Mike Collopy (left) and Mike Kochert (right) at the 2011 RRF award banquet in Duluth, Minnesota.

2011 RRF Award Recipients

Submitted by Gary Santolo

The Raptor Research Foundation makes available several awards for professionals and students annually. These awards range from non-monetary recognition for outstanding achievement in raptor

research and conservation, such as the Fran and Frederick Hamerstrom Award and the Tom Cade Award, to the James R. Koplin travel grant for students, and the William C. Anderson Awards for best student presentation and posters. The Leslie Brown Memorial Grant, the Dean Amadon Grant, and the Steven R. Tulley Grant support research. Information and deadlines for these can be found at <http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org/grants-and-awards>.

Please encourage your colleagues and students to make nominations for these awards or to apply for these grants. In this way, deserving potential recipients can be recognized or receive some financial support for their hard work and contributions to the understanding and conservation of raptors.

2011 Tom Cade Award

The Tom Cade Award is presented to individuals whom have made significant advances in captive propagation and reintroduction of raptors.

Perhaps no name is currently more synonymous with captive propagation and reintroduction of birds of prey than Bill Heinrich. He has had a career spanning almost 4 decades, during which he was, and continues to be, instrumental in recovery efforts of birds of prey, most notably the peregrine falcon, Aplomado falcon, and California condor, 3 species that had experienced catastrophic population declines. He has taken an active role in recovery efforts and the training and collaboration with researchers at an international scale. He was at the forefront of testing and refining reintroduction techniques to the extent that they are now being successfully applied on reintroduction projects throughout the world. Yet despite this, he is recognized by colleagues as someone that works behind the scenes to effectively get the job done while his efforts go largely unrecognized except by those who are closest to him.



2011 Fran and Frederick Hamerstrom Award

Fran and Frederick Hamerstrom Award is presented in recognition of individuals who have followed their example in making significant contributions toward the understanding of raptor ecology and natural history. This year there were two recipients.

The first recipient, Dr. Mike Collopy has been a key figure in North American raptor research and management over the last 30 years. He has played critical roles not only as a researcher, but in the development of the scientific infrastructure of raptor conservation. He has been instrumental in the development of RRF through long-term dedication to the organization, having served in several elected positions including president. However, a particularly important and recognized role is his education of a generation of students that have continued to be professionally involved in raptor research. As one reviewer noted, his overall contributions to raptor research and to RRF are unmatched, and the award long overdue.

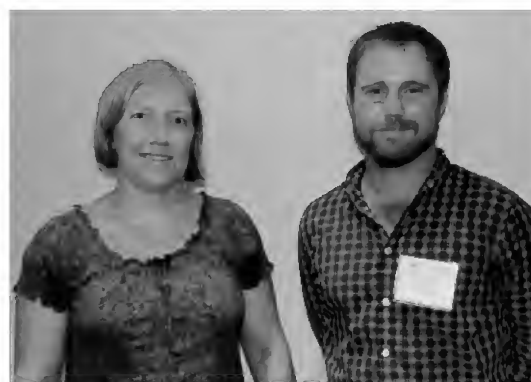


The second recipient, Dr. Fabrizio Sergio is possibly the youngest recipient to date and has been described by colleagues as a “complete researcher”: he develops great ideas gleaned from both theory and field knowledge, is an excellent field biologist, but also a great large project manager, has thorough knowledge of statistics and the literature, and, importantly, is a superb communicator of the research. He has been an incredibly productive researcher, with over 50 raptor related papers, 23 book chapters, and has published raptor-research papers in both *Nature* and *Science*, all before he was 40 years old. His work is regularly reported in public media, including *National Geographic*, *National Public Radio*, *BBC*, *Radio-network Deutschlandfunk* and international news outlets.

2011- Andersen Presentation Award

Poster - Ben Skipper: Comparison of reproductive performance of exurban and urban Mississippi Kites.

Oral Presentation - Tricia Miller: Striking a balance: modeling migration of Golden Eagles through wind energy developments of the central Appalachian Mountains.



2011- James Koplin Travel Award

Kristin Keyes: Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*) spatial origins across North America: a stable isotope approach.

Jean-Francois Therrien (center): Avian predators play a key role in population regulation and energy flux of the arctic tundra food web.

Ben Skipper: Is aggressive nest defense by urban Mississippi Kites (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) triggered by landscape features?



2011- Amadon Grant

Guilad Friedemann: New raptors' inter-specific competition due to man-made ecological pressures.

2011- Tully Grant

Laxman Prasad Poudyal: Vulture Conservation Awareness Program in Chitwan National Park, Nepal.

2011- Brown Award

The RRF Leslie Brown Review Committee chose to split the 2011 Brown Award between

Darcy Ogada, for her proposal, "Conserving threatened vultures in northern Kenya: collaborating with community-run conservancies to understand how land-use practices and human activities impact vulture populations."

Robin Whytock for "The Effects of the Commercial Bushmeat Trade on Raptors in the Ebo Forest, Littoral Province, Cameroon."

Invest Yourself in the Raptor Research Foundation

Submitted by Clint Boal, Director at Large No.2

I became a member of the Raptor Research Foundation while a graduate student in 1991. For many years my involvement was limited to regular attendance at RRF meetings. In about 2000, I became a member of an awards committee, transitioned to Awards Committee Chair, and eventually became a Member of the Board. My service has been incredibly rewarding, as it has provided an opportunity to meet, interact with, and learn from, some truly wonderful people that have been elected to govern the Raptor Research Foundation. I think over the last few years we have done a very good job in advancing the mission of the RRF and increasing our profile. For example, our new, well designed website and our presence on Facebook have dramatically improved accessibility and communication to RRF. We have increased student travel awards and established an Early Career Raptor Researcher committee. As always, we address contemporary conservation issues and respond to requests for information on raptor conservation issues.

The Board of Directors, Officers, and Committee Chairs are all highly dedicated and invested in the Raptor Research Foundation. Our board and officers meet physically each year at the Annual Meeting of the Raptor Research Foundation, and virtually by email interactions throughout the year. During our meeting, we address a variety of issues, ranging from annual recurrent duties, such as developing and approving the annual budget, to current items such as contemporary conservation issues. There are also a number of tasks we deal with throughout the year, and we conduct them with the best interest of the Foundation in mind.

Although we work hard to keep the wheels of operation turning smoothly, all too often it is the same cadre of members carrying the load. This is in part out of dedication, commitment, and concern for the welfare of Foundation, but also in part due to the fact that few members step forward offering to take a turn at leadership. This may be due to intimidation of taking a leadership role (I know it certainly held me back early on), concern over time commitments, or just not knowing how or where to start.

Here are some suggestions. Based on my experience, the easiest way to become involved is helping out with the various committees. Serving on a committee is a great way to gain experience and eventually step up to being a committee chair. I served as an award committee member for a couple years before stepping up as the Awards Committee Chair. Once in the position, I spent a lot of time looking for people to serve as committee members, and never once had someone come forward and ask if they could help. I would have been grateful for an offer of help, and I guarantee you that Gary Santolo, current Awards Committee Chair, would welcome such offers. I am also sure that the Website Coordinator would welcome help in maintaining our website. In short, we have several committees and anyone could use help from interested members. If you have been a long term member of RRF, I would encourage you to take on a more senior role in leadership, and consider running for a position as an Officer or on the Board of Directors. Talk to current officers, board members, and committee chairs; all our contact information is provided at our website. Also, visit the link "Get Involved" under the "About Us" tab on the website. Anyone of us would be happy to hear from you and discuss what we do, how we do it, and the time required. We would also discuss the reward we all feel in working together, learning from each other and the experience, and the friendships that develop out of it.

Elsewhere in this issue of Wingspan you will find information regarding the upcoming 2012 RRF elections, in which we will be looking to fill several leadership positions. Consider putting yourself forward to stand for one of the board or officer positions or to help with our committees. The stronger the membership and its investment in RRF, the stronger RRF will be as a unified voice for conservation and research of birds of prey.

**RRF comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment to Permit Take
as provided under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act
for the West Butte Wind Project in Oregon**
Submitted by Rick Watson

The purpose of the RRF Conservation Committee is to prepare and disseminate written communications on contemporary issues of conservation concern involving birds of prey that usefully lend the RRF's scientific expertise and credibility to resolution of conservation issues. With that directive in mind we prepared a comment on the USFWS proposal to allow incidental take of golden eagles at the proposed West Butte Wind Project. This proposed permit is the first of its kind and therefore sets a precedent that will likely be followed by many more, so a commentary from the RRF seemed an appropriate and valuable contribution to make. The Conservation Committee prepared the commentary which was reviewed and approved by the Board, and submitted by the President. In summary, the RRF appreciated the pro-active approach taken by the USFWS to address golden eagle mortality resulting from collision with wind turbines and agreed that the kinds of conservation and mitigation activities proposed could result in net benefits to golden eagle populations. However, the modeling and assumptions behind the mortality predictions and mitigation measures could be substantially improved with post-construction study, so our comments focused on how proposed study designs should be modified and made statistically more robust. The full text of the letter and comments can be found online at:

<http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org/conservation/position-statements>

http://raptorresearchfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/2012_DEA_West_Butte.pdf

Raptor News

News from International Centre for Birds of Prey

Submitted by Jemima Parry-Jones

After the winter of 2010/2011 which was bitterly cold and long in the UK, this winter (2011/2012) has so far been extraordinarily mild. The grass has never stopped growing, wild birds appear to be doing well, the wild daffodils are showing their green tips, and our breeding season is already up and running with eggs from Griffon Vultures, Tawny Eagles, African Fish Eagles, Grey Buzzard Eagles and Indian Eagle Owls to name but a few, although it is still January as I write.



This year in May the International Centre for Birds of Prey will reach its 45th anniversary. That makes it the oldest dedicated bird of prey centre in the world, and sometimes it feels like it! We have probably flown birds, spoken to and hopefully changed the attitudes of over a million people in that time span, we have bred over 65 species of birds of prey and owls, we have taken in thousands of injured wild birds of prey (and others!), we have assisted in scientific research utilising our birds in non-invasive investigations, we have trained and flown the birds for film work, we have answered thousands of cries of help for advice on a myriad of raptor related topics. We have rescued birds from buildings, fruit nets, barbed wire fences, chimneys and ponds. We have taught thousands of

people handling techniques given thousands more the experience of getting close to the trained birds, hopefully engendering a respect and joy of wildlife that they did not have before.

We have been involved in many conservation programmes, sometimes just advising, occasionally from afar, sometimes being far more involved, our most recent example being the conservation breeding programme with the three critically endangered species of Gyps vultures in South Asia. We have been privileged enough to work alongside such eminent names as Professor Ian Newton, Lindsay Oaks, Tom Cade, and many others including our current RRF President Ruth Tingay!

We open back up to the public in two days (February 1st), the Centre which although going through tough times since 2004 is back up to the standard that it should be, our staff and volunteers having worked tirelessly (well OK we have been tired!) to make it so. We have all sorts of



special events planned for this coming year, spring is on the way and we are looking forward to the next 45 years with anticipation and pleasure.

On a personal note, I would be delighted to welcome RRF members to visit us, see what we do, see top quality bird of prey demonstrations, showing these birds for the incredibly special creatures that they are, and sharing our passion, which will I hope never wain.

News from the World Owl Hall of Fame

Submitted by Karla Bloem

A lifelong owl researcher from Montana, a German molecular biotechnology professor, a California couple that welcomed millions of Internet visitors to their backyard “owl cam,” and a South African owl who has nested on a balcony for four years will share awards at the International Festival of Owls in Houston, Minn., on March 2-4.

The top winner – receiving the 10th annual festival’s Champion of Owls Award – is Denver Holt, founder of the Owl Research Institute near Carlo, Mont. Holt will attend the festival and deliver the keynote address at the festival banquet on March 3. The Champion of Owls Award recognizes people who have had a broad impact on owls in conservation, science, legislation, education, rehabilitation and other fields. Holt, who has studied owls for more than 30 years, and other employees of the Owl Research Institute, have pushed to share owl research and understanding beyond biologists and other scientists to the general public. He has been a frequent media source in light of this year’s irruption of snowy owls from the Arctic into the lower 48 states.

Other winners of festival awards:

Special Achievement Award: Professor Dr. Michael Wink, Heidelberg, Germany. Professor Wink’s work in molecular biotechnology has made him a leader in owl taxonomy – deciding which owls fit into which species – which is crucial to efforts to protect extremely rare species. Wink will be present at the festival.

Special Achievement Award: Carlos and Donna Royal of San Marcos, Calif. The Royals attracted international attention when they put up a nesting box in their backyard, attracted a pair of barn owls, outfitted the area with a live video stream, and attracted 21 million viewers in 104 countries.

Lady Gray’l Award: Pot Plant Owl, a spotted eagle owl who has raised broods in a potted plant on a balcony in metropolitan Johannesburg, South Africa, every year since 2008. Pot Plant Owl, named by Tracy and Allan Eccles, who live in the home attached to the balcony, has also been the focus of webcam that has attracted an international following. Although Pot Plant Owl cannot attend the Houston festival, the Tracy Eccles plans to be there.

The World Owl Hall of Fame awards will be presented at the 10th annual International Festival of Owls and is sponsored by the International Festival of Owls and the Global Owl Project. The International Festival of Owls takes place March 2-4 in Houston, Minn., also home to Alice, the popular great horned owl who works at the Houston Nature Center and lives with Karla Bloem, center director. The

festival began as a party recognizing the day Alice hatched, but has grown steadily over the years to encompass everything “owly.”

Festival sponsors include Friends of the Houston Nature Center, the Houston Nature Center, Houston Hoedown Days, and the Carl and Verna Schmidt Foundation. The World Owl Hall of Fame is sponsored by the International Festival of Owls and the Global Owl Project. **More information and photos are available online at <http://www.festivalofowls.com/worldowlhalloffame.htm>.**

Citizen Scientists Key to Success for National Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey

Submitted by Wade Eakle

A key annual event in the recovery of Bald Eagle populations took place January 4-18, when hundreds of citizen scientists took to the field for the 34th annual Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey. “The survey is a true public-private partnership with hundreds of volunteer citizen scientists taking part, in addition to federal, state, and NGO biologists. Forty-three states continue to actively participate, with over 740 standardized survey routes across the country,” said Wade Eakle, the 2012 national survey coordinator and an ecologist for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

The data are collected during a two-week window every year; then sent to a national database set up to monitor eagle populations in the lower 48 states. It is part of a national effort to identify important winter habitat and develop a total population index for the wintering eagle population. The National Wildlife Federation began the survey in 1979, and the USGS organized and coordinated it from 1997 to 2007. In 2007, the USGS established a partnership with the USACE to maintain the long-term, national coordination of the survey, data analysis, and reporting.

“As the length of the Bald Eagle time series grows with each annual survey, the potential scientific applications for the information increase, far beyond what was ever envisioned at the time that the survey was first initiated,” commented U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Director Marcia McNutt.

“Each citizen volunteer who has put in the time, care, and effort in the more than 30 years that this survey has been undertaken should be proud of being part of an exceptionally effective effort in wildlife research, recovery, and management.”

Brian Millsap, National Raptor Coordinator with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque, NM, applauds the dedication of the hundreds of volunteers that continue to collect this important data. “The information gathered on population trends and habitat is increasingly important to permitting decisions being made by the Service for renewable energy and other projects,” Millsap said.



“Head on” Photo by Wade Eakle.
A bald eagle is spotted in St. Paul,

Each year the survey data are compiled to help create a long-term trend analysis. A new 25-year-trend analysis for the years 1986 – 2010 is due out this spring. Past survey results are available at <http://ocid.nacse.org/nbii/eagles/help.php>.

USACE plays a significant role in recovery efforts of the Bald Eagle by supporting eagle conservation, including breeding season and midwinter surveys, management of habitat, education, and outreach. The geography of USACE projects has also been vital to Bald Eagle populations. USACE manages over 450 man-made lakes within the continental United States and has jurisdiction over approximately 24,000 miles of inland navigation rivers. USACE reservoir projects encompass approximately 11.6 million acres of land and open water habitat, with the total shoreline length exceeding the entire coastline of the United States.

<http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/bird/midwinter.cfm>

News from the Peregrine Fund

Submitted by Susan Whaley

Gyr Falcon-ptarmigan conference proceedings now in print version

The print version of the proceedings of a 2011 conference on the effect of climate change on Gyr Falcons, ptarmigan, and other arctic wildlife may now be ordered from the publisher. The full-color, soft-cover publication consists of a conference summary by Professor Ian Newton and 73 research papers and related charts and graphs in two volumes:

- Volume I is 372 pages and includes an overview of Gyr Falcons, ptarmigan, and the Arctic, as well as papers specific to North America.
- Volume II is 400 pages and includes papers specific to Greenland, Iceland, Scandinavia, and Russia; papers on related species; and monitoring and conservation strategies.

Each volume is \$37, plus shipping and handling. In August, the proceedings will be available on Amazon and the price is expected to increase to \$50 for each volume. Order information:

<https://www.createspace.com/3603489>

More than 150 scientists, students, managers, and other conservationists attended the conference, “Gyr Falcons and Ptarmigan in a Changing World,” at Boise State University, Feb. 1-3, 2011. Participants from Canada, Iceland, Scandinavia, Russia, United States and other nations gathered to share their findings and determine what knowledge gaps remain on this complex topic.

Inaction, lack of funds worsen vulture crisis

Despite their value to humans and the environment, vultures continue to experience serious population declines made worse by government inaction and a lack of funding for skilled experts to address the problem, according to a peer-reviewed article co-authored by Darcy Ogada and Munir Virani of The Peregrine Fund and Felicia Keesing of Bard College. Published in the March issue of the *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, the paper said the vulture crisis highlights the importance of collaboration among scientists, governments, donors, and media, particularly in Africa. The authors said 61% of vulture species worldwide are threatened with extinction.

Two of three wild-hatched condor chicks join the Arizona flock

For the first time, three California Condor chicks hatched in the wild in Arizona during a single breeding season. The chicks were visually confirmed in April, August and September. In November, one chick was found dead below its nest cave in the Grand Canyon, possibly due to a broken wing suffered in a fall. The other two chicks successfully fledged, including one that is being reared by a parental trio, another first.

Chapter in new ecotoxicology book details discovery of diclofenac's effect on vultures

Peregrine Fund Vice President Rick Watson and the late Lindsay Oaks, Washington State University veterinarian, wrote the story of a landmark discovery for a new book, "Wildlife Ecotoxicology: Forensic Approaches," published recently by Springer. Watson and Oaks co-authored a chapter detailing three years of painstaking research and field work in Pakistan and the discovery of diclofenac as the cause of a massive and catastrophic die-off of vultures in Asia. The book provides case-by-case examinations of how toxic chemical effects on wildlife have resulted in new policies and regulations aimed at improving the environment.

American Kestrel Partnership

Submitted by Matt Giovanni

The Peregrine Fund will soon launch the official and interactive website for its new research and conservation program, the American Kestrel Partnership. Introductory information can be found at the temporary webpage: <http://www.peregrinefund.org/american-kestrel>. Data from the Breeding Bird Survey, Christmas Bird Count, migration counts (see recent data summary by Raptor Population Index), and various nest-box monitoring programs indicate that American Kestrel populations are experiencing persistent, long-term declines in many regions of North America. However, the use and availability of existing data are largely insufficient for understanding and mitigating the causes. The American Kestrel Partnership is an international research network designed to generate data, models, and conservation strategies for kestrel habitat and populations at large spatial scales. The Partnership unites the data-generating capacity of citizen scientists with the research expertise of professional scientists by promoting collaboration among citizen scientists, universities, government agencies, conservation organizations, schools, and businesses. Among other research goals, the Partnership is coordinating and supporting an international network of locally managed nest-box monitoring programs by providing an interactive website for partners to create their own profiles, access and share resources, and contribute, manage, and access nest-box monitoring data.

We encourage researchers to create partner profiles and participate in the website's partner network. We are also seeking professional researchers interested in co-developing grant proposals focused on demographics, toxicology, and genetics of the American Kestrel at a continental scale. Please contact Matt Giovanni (mgiovanni@peregrine.fund) for more information.

Peregrine Heaven at Panna

Submitted by Munir Virani

My colleague Dr Patrick Benson and I stared at the abyss below. A sheer drop with vertical cliffs covered in vulture droppings, jagged ledges and a labyrinth of shrubs with ghost-white roots. A flock of noisy Rose-ringed Parakeets flew by. At the bottom, a ruby colored pond laid still with the reflection of the sky so vivid. We could almost envision a tiger frolicking in the water. A Long-billed Vulture floated gracefully in front of us. I clutched tightly at the metal railing in front of us that prevented me from plummeting over the edge of the cliff. Suddenly, from a distance, we heard the characteristic "kruupp, kruupp" followed by an ear piercing "kwee kwee kwee kwee kwee kwee". As we turned to look, a black and orange blur whizzed in front of me like a tracer bullet. For this was the home of the "migs" of all falcons - the home of the Black Shaheen, a subspecies of the Peregrine Falcon and perhaps the handsomest of all falcons in the world. We had finally arrived at Peregrine Heaven. It is not easy to put into words one's admiration, no, obsession for falcons. We were completely immersed in the moment.



We were at Panna Tiger Reserve in the heart of India's central state of Madhya Pradesh where we had spent three days evaluating vulture populations and providing training to field guides and naturalists of this high profile Tiger Reserve. Mr. R. Sreenivasa Murthy, the Field Director of Panna had invited us to do just that. The park consists of two massive plateaus with a spectacular gorge where the Azure colored Ken River runs through. The landscape is dry comprising teak and a variety of other stunning deciduous trees. Four-horned antelope, Spotted deer and Blue bulls dotted the landscape with the occasional Jackal scurrying across the tracks. "This is Geheri Ghaat (deep gorge)," said Lakhan, one of the guides and participants of the program. "You will very much like it here," he continued with his typical Indian accent and a twinkle in his eye. Panna was going through a transition period. Famous for its tiger population, the park had lost all its tigers mainly through poaching. Over the last two years, a bold move by the Forest Department under Murthy's dynamic leadership has seen the reintroduction of two females and a male, now under 24/7 radio surveillance. "The Field Director has brought a new lease of life to this park and for our livelihood," said Ramrattan, another guide from the village of Madla close to Panna. "We are absolutely and very grateful to him."

Our visit at Panna over the next two days took us through some incredible landscape. On the second day out, we had to leave our camp at 4.00 am to get all the way past the gorges we had seen the previous day. The scenery and ambience of being in the heart of rural India made up for lost sleep. I would have to rate Panna as having the most beautiful landscape I have ever come across in India. We recorded Long-billed Vultures at most cliffs but not in the numbers I had hoped. From a fleeting perspective (in what my friend Simon Thomsett calls a "galloping horse survey") we estimated that there might be about 50-60 pairs of Long-billed Vultures in the park. We also observed a dead adult



Long-billed Vulture on a nest, which solidifies the case for a systematic long-term monitoring plan for vultures in Panna. Sadly, the Oriental White-backed Vultures continued to elude us. The *Arjun* trees at one location where at least 44 Oriental Whitebacked Vulture nests were reported by the park authorities in December failed to show any signs of this species. The trees had been badly coppiced to provide fodder for goat herders. I see this as a growing problem for tree-nesting raptors throughout India and one that needs to be urgently addressed. We came across Changeable Hawk Eagles, Egyptian Vultures, White-eyed Buzzards, and Crested Serpent Eagles. One especially bright moment of our survey was when we observed a breeding Egyptian Vulture that had a black-tipped beak, suggesting that a migrant bird was nesting in the park.

From our brief, yet exciting survey at Panna, we felt that there was tremendous opportunity to conduct raptor studies in this spectacular park. Given the support and enthusiasm shown by all rangers and especially the Field Director, we strongly recommend that raptor studies be implemented as part of a management and conservation plan for Panna Tiger Reserve. Birds of prey are top predators, charismatic species that offer themselves as useful indicators of ecosystem health. In particular, we recommend that raptor studies be undertaken on:

- 1) Annual systematic breeding surveys of *critically endangered* Gyps vultures in Panna Tiger Reserve based on photos of cliff nesting sites. These surveys should be conducted at least twice a year when birds are nest-building or incubating in November and December; and again in March/April before fledging when vultures have large chicks.
- 2) Annual systematic breeding surveys of the endangered Egyptian Vulture;
- 3) A study on the ecological requirements and breeding biology of the Black Shaheen Falcon. We observed at least six-eight pairs in the various gorges of the park and Panna perhaps holds the highest density of this species that we have come across. In Naoroji's book "Birds of Prey of the Indian Subcontinent (2006), the Shaheen Falcon is listed as a "bird to watch" and the author highly recommends future studies of this species on aspects of taxonomy, present status and distribution.

Broad-based biological and ecological studies would help provide critical data on mortality, natality and turnover rates, together with workable data on reproductivity, longevity, and age-specific survival rates for adults, immatures and nestlings. Radio telemetry studies would enhance our knowledge on habitat use, behaviour, juvenile dispersal and estimation of territories and home ranges in relation to habitat and prey availability. However, before conducting intensive radio-telemetry studies of the species, we recommend that basic surveys to determine locations of contiguous breeding pairs be done to get a broader perspective of their distribution and abundance.

African Fish Eagle population decline at Lake Baringo

Submitted by Seren Waters

Nothing characterizes Kenya's beautiful Rift Valley lakes better than waking to the unmistakable calls of a pair of African Fish Eagles. During my study at Lake Baringo this 'sound of Africa' served as my alarm every morning, and as I write this in the UK, with the temperature at -10 degrees, this memory strengthens my desire to help conserve these amazing birds, and the magnificent ecosystem in which they live.

Lake Baringo is located at the threshold to Northern Kenya; situated in a semi-arid region, the lake is a biodiversity hotspot with over 470 species of bird recorded at it. The population of the Baringo area is mainly made up of three different tribes (Tugen, Il Chamus and Pokot), making it a highly complex and, at times, volatile cultural region. In realising both Baringo's cultural diversity and its unique but fragile ecological status, UNESCO proposed to make it a World Heritage Site. The dramatic decline in Fish Eagle numbers at Lake Baringo over the past three decades, perhaps stands as a testament to the fragility of this ecosystem under increasing anthropogenic pressures. In Leslie Brown's book *The African Fish Eagle*, published in 1980, Brown mapped the locations of all the Fish Eagles known to him on the lake, documenting a healthy population of 70 individual birds. This was in stark contrast to September 2011, when Shiv Kapila and I counted only 25 individual birds – a worrying 64% decrease in Fish Eagle numbers in little over three decades.

There is a strong body of work that highlights the ways in which the lake's ecosystem is changing. One of the most concerning ecosystem changes has been to the lake's water body – during the 1970s the average depth of the lake was 8m, whereas by 2006 this had dropped to just 2.5m. A major cause of this has been the increasing levels of sedimentation, caused by higher levels of soil erosion in both the upper and lower parts of the Baringo basin. Sedimentation has had a detrimental impact on the lake's fish stock; in particular the numbers of the endemic *Oreochromis niloticus baringoensis* (Tilapia) have plummeted in recent years, reducing the eagle's main source of food. A second important change has been a reduction in the covering of mature vegetation in close proximity to the lakes shore. This is thought to be linked to the increase in the number of livestock frequenting the lake for water, and is an issue for Fish Eagles because they require tall vegetation for nesting and perching sites.

With support from The Peregrine Fund, I set out to establish the anthropogenic causes of ecosystem change at Lake Baringo, and how these changes affected Fish Eagles. My research used in-depth interviews with local communities to identify links between local livelihood practices and ecosystem change, in a study area located in the lower catchment of the lake's basin. I hope that my results are

able to provide a detailed analysis of the livelihoods that lie behind some of the ecosystem changes that are threatening the Fish Eagles habitat. I hold the belief that there are complex and entrenched features of societies that must be understood and taken into account when researching ecosystem change, and trying to develop solutions.

The plight of the Fish Eagles, and their habitat, is not just worrying for those of us who have a passion for raptors, and conservation more generally. As one of the lake's main tourist attractions, Fish Eagles play a vital role in the local economy. This alone means that we should remain optimistic about getting the conservation message across. For multiple reasons, both human and Fish Eagle populations are fully reliant on the Lake Baringo ecosystem remaining productive. If this message can be made as resonating and memorable in the minds of all local livelihood groups as the Fish Eagle's morning call, we may go some way to reversing the trend in Fish Eagle decline.

ANNOUNCEMENTS and BRIEF NEWS ITEMS

Announcements

Batumi Bird Festival – Five Years of Batumi Raptor Count (Republic of Georgia)

This fall, Batumi Raptor Count will be celebrating its fifth year of migration monitoring of the Batumi Bottleneck in the Republic of Georgia. (*Yes. Georgia the country, not the US state!*) To celebrate, BRC is kicking off the Batumi Bird Festival from 20 to 23 September 2012, a full four-day program about the study & conservation of the migration spectacle. We guarantee lots of raptors and other migrants, interesting lectures by leading raptor specialists & conservationists, delicious Georgian food, and comfortable accommodation in a warm and hospitable atmosphere. There'll be daily excursions offered to not only our own watch sites to watch the many passing raptors, but to other excellent birding hotspots and national parks in the region, including the Chorokhi River delta and the Kolkheti Wetlands. Cultural visits to famous churches and bridges in the Keda district of Batumi will also be available. All trips will be led by experienced guides. We aim to make it unforgettable experience, and we hope you'll join us! For more information, please visit the BRC website (<http://www.batimiraptorcount.org/>) or email batumibirdfestival@gmail.com.

Hawk Counters Wanted – Batumi Raptor Count (Republic of Georgia)

Batumi Raptor Count is seeking volunteer hawk counters to help conduct its fifth annual raptor survey of the Batumi Bottleneck along the southeastern edge of the Black Sea in the Republic of Georgia from 17 August until 31 October 2012. This is one of the best places in the world to see autumn raptor migrations. Counters should be motivated by a strong interest in raptors (or bird migration in general), preferably have experience birdwatching or conducting migration counts, speak good basic English, can focus on counting migrants in a standardized manner and are motivated to adhere to count protocols, and can avail themselves for at least two weeks to assist with the count. Volunteer accommodation (including meals) is offered in a comfortable homestay for about 8 EUR/day. Deadline for the first round of applications is 15 April. For more information, please visit the BRC website (<http://www.batimiraptorcount.org/>) or email batimiraptorcount@gmail.com. Thank you!

JOURNALS AVAILABLE – I have pretty much every issue from 1997-2011 of the following journals available for the cost of shipping: Auk, Condor, Wilson Bulletin/Wilson Journal of Ornithology, Journal of Field Ornithology, and Journal of Raptor Research. Please contact Glenn Proudfoot at glproudfoot@vassar.edu.

Raptor Workshop: Accredited through University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point

Three 5-day workshops entitled "Introduction to Raptor Field Techniques" will be held in Stevens Point, WI by Eugene Jacobs of the Linwood Springs Research Station and Loren Ayers of the Wis. Dept. of Natural Resources. Summer Sessions: 4-8 June, 25-29 June, 2012. Fall Sessions: 27-31 August, 17-21 September, and 8-12 October 2012. Receive first hand experience working with: live raptors, capturing, handling, banding techniques, broadcast call surveys, tree climbing, rappelling, blood sampling and more. Cost is \$435 and space is limited, so register early. For more information and a registration form visit <http://www.RaptorResearch.com>

The Draper Museum of Natural History (DMNH) at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, in Cody, Wyoming invites proposals for the Center's 2012-2013 Resident Fellowship Program.

Fellowships are intended to help support research advancing knowledge about the natural and cultural heritage of the American West. Proposals that connect with ongoing DMNH research on raptor ecology and/or public education about raptors in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem are especially encouraged in 2012-2013. Fellows receive a stipend up to \$5,000, and must spend at least one week's residency at the DMNH to become familiar with museum resources and ongoing research and educational activities. Proposals (limited to two single-spaced pages) should describe purpose, general methods, timeline, and anticipated products of research and how an affiliation with the DMNH will contribute to project success.

Please submit the project proposal, CV, and two letters of reference by 15 April 2012 to:

Resident Fellows Program
Buffalo Bill Historical Center
Attn. Draper Museum of Natural History
720 Sheridan Avenue, Cody, WY 82414-3428

Successful candidates will be selected and notified by 01 May 2012. For additional information on ongoing DMNH programs, see www.bbhc.org/explore/greater-yellowstone-natural-history/

Requests for Assistance

Vulture Conservation in Pakistan – The Dhartee Development Society (DDS) is working on an innovative vulture conservation project, which is first of its kind in Pakistan. In the project, uncontaminated food is being supplied to free-ranging vultures in open space. DDS, with support of UNDP GEF Small Grants Programme, launched a rescue operation in Nagarparkar in 2008 to conserve vultures where its population has declined alarmingly. DDS found a small population of the bird in its natural habitat and launched a rescue center where it trying to conserve this species and increase the population. To learn more about this project and how you can help, please contact:

Mansoor Dahri, Executive Director
Dhartee Development Society (DDS), Hyderabad Sindh, Pakistan
vulture.restaurant@gmail.com

For Sale

RRF Publications, Pins, and Decals – Hard copies of The Journal of Raptor Research (Vol. 1-30), most Raptor Research Reports, and RRF pins and decals may be purchased directly from RRF (Angela Matz, 101 12th Ave., Room 110, Fairbanks, AK 99701, USA; email: angela_matz@fws.gov). See http://raptorresearchfoundation.org/back_issues_jrr.htm for details and prices. Orders for 4 or more issues receive a 30% discount. Hard copies of The Journal of Raptor Research (Vol. 31+) may be purchased from Ornithological Societies of North America (5400 Bosque Blvd, Suite 680, Waco, TX 76710, USA; phone: 1-254-399-9636; email: business@osnabirds.org; web: <http://www.osnabirds.org>). Some older issues are not available in hardcopy; but all issues from Vol. 1-39 are available on SORA (<http://elibrary.unm.edu/sora/jrr/>) for free download.

Raptor Books and Publications

Raptor Research and Management Techniques -- Copies are still available from many natural history booksellers or order from Hancock House online at www.hancockhouse.com. Look for the reduced price for RRF members.

Special issue on Birds of Prey – In the German monthly journal “Der Falke - Journal für Vogelbeobachter“ (The Falcon – journal for birders) a special issue on birds of prey was published in 2011. It contains 56 pages full of interesting news and information about raptors, many excellent photos and a lovely poster showing a red kite in flight. The journal is published in German. It begins with eight short reviews of current scientific publications concerning mainly European raptors. Six chapters deal with the biology of raptors: Current status of birds of prey in Germany; Results of the European Monitoring of Raptors and Owls; The return of Ospreys and Sea-Eagles to southern Germany; Raptor migration between the Black Sea and the Caucasus; The Griffon vulture in Middle Europe; Feeding strategies of the Griffon Vulture, Black Vulture and Egyptian Vulture. A section about bird protection contains four chapters: Raptor protection international; Lead poisoning in raptors: the Sea-Eagle as a research model; Illegal persecution of raptors in Germany; Falcon hybrids. And there is a paper on where to watch wintering Rough-legged Buzzards in Germany and the new website www.ornitho.de.

Der Falke - Journal für Vogelbeobachter no. 58
special issue 2011; 56 p., many pictures, € 6,95 plus delivery
www.falke-journal.de
ISSN 0323-357X

New migration count trend analysis released – A new report by the Raptor Population Index Project shows the majority of the 26 species across North America are either recovering or in stable condition. The Raptor Population Index Project is a cooperative partnership among four leading raptor conservation organizations: Bird Studies Canada, Hawk Migration Association of North America, HawkWatch International and Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. Results published at www.rpi-project.org include easy-to-read trend maps (e.g. Fig. 1) for each species and an online resource for scientists,

educators and wildlife enthusiasts. The analysis used data from 48 raptor migration watchsites stretching across North America.

The Raptor Population Index system includes over 200 independent raptor migration sites across North America that together form the world's largest bird migration monitoring network. These sites are operated by mainly volunteer citizen scientists who use standardized protocols and submit their migration count data through an electronic database, HawkCount.org. Launched in 2004 the goal of the Raptor Population Index is to produce and regularly update continental-scale assessments of the population trends and the conservation status of migratory raptors. The project's first publication, *The State of North America's Birds of Prey*, a 466-page book released in 2008, is regarded as a keystone in the understanding of migratory raptors and their conservation in North America. To increase accessibility, the project will now deliver results online and update them annually. For more information on recent RPI results and population status updates for each raptor species, trend graphs and maps, visit the RPI website (<http://www.rpi-project.org/>).



Figure 1 American Kestrels are declining at several sites in North America (red arrows indicate negative population trends over the last 10 years).



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